



# The Sacramento Bee

## ***Another View: Let's put state on fast track to the future***

**By Quentin L. Kopp -**

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*Quentin L. Kopp, a retired judge and chairman of the California High-Speed Rail Authority, is responding to the June 11 editorial "A speeding train – loaded with big questions."*

Gasoline costs almost \$5 per gallon; airline fares increase while service declines; congestion chokes freeways; air quality worsens. What's missing? High-speed electrified 200-mph trains, and the time has never been more propitious to launch a travel option recognized and used worldwide for decades.

High-speed trains use one-third the energy of air travel and one-fifth the energy of automobile travel. High-speed trains will reduce our dependence on foreign oil by 22 million barrels a year. Moreover, they'll operate at a profit (just like the European and Asian systems), without taxpayer subsidy. And, the system will be as safe as other worldwide high-speed rail systems, which haven't incurred a single operational fatality.

California can't build enough new freeways and airport runways to accommodate steadily increasing transportation demands. Supported by the governor, leading legislators, hundreds of local and regional elected officials, our major airports, air quality districts and regional transportation planning and programming agencies, California's high-speed train project represents a down-to-earth, feasible transportation alternative which voters can implement through a bond measure on Nov. 4. This \$9.95 billion bond lays the foundation for an equal amount (or more) of federal funds and comparable private investment to build the project.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority has developed and continues to improve plans for an 800-mile system from San Diego to Sacramento. Upon completion of the project's environmental analysis for the Central Valley-Bay Area segment within the next month, the authority will be able to approve additional details of a business plan.

A comprehensive current risk management program to guarantee the state will not sustain unexpected project costs beyond its foundational investment represented by the bond measure is embodied in the authority-sponsored Assembly Bill 3034 which passed the Assembly 60-3 and will be heard in the Senate Transportation Committee this week.

AB 3034 contains the Department of Finance and gubernatorial staff recommendations to enable bond fund availability for the 800-mile route, including the Altamont Pass corridor between the Central Valley and Bay Area. It requires that 90 percent of the bond proceeds be spent on construction, mandates specified financing plans for each system segment before construction begins, establishes criteria for the most cost-efficient segments to be built as highest priority and removes any possible legal obstacles to private investment and federal funding.

Based on meticulous analyses of similar existing systems plus pinpoint ridership and cost studies, California high-speed rail will enable California once more to demonstrate Golden State ingenuity and distinctiveness which has characterized California for more than 160 years.